

Our Finest



OCKHAM



The New Zealand Book Awards Trust takes great pleasure in presenting the 16 finalists for 2021 in the Ockham New Zealand Book Awards, the country's most prestigious awards for literature.

Reading all of this year's 179 entries and narrowing a competitive field down to a shortlist of 16 is an enormous task, and we owe a debt of gratitude to our 12 local judges, whose names appear on each category page that follows, as do their comments on the finalists. The fiction panel was joined at this stage by award-winning American novelist and writer, Tommy Orange.

The Trust is also very grateful to the organisations that continue to share our belief in the undeniable value of literature to Aotearoa. Creative New Zealand remains our stalwart cornerstone funder, and we commend the vision of our naming-rights sponsor, Ockham Residential. This year we are delighted to welcome Booksellers Aotearoa New Zealand back to our sponsor whānau, which also includes Jann Medlicott and the Acorn Foundation, Mary and Peter Biggs, and MitoQ. Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou.

We are fortunate to partner with the Auckland Writers Festival, which showcases the awards ceremony as a marquee festival event and features a number of the finalists in its 2021 programme.

We are thrilled for all the authors whose work has been recognised and honoured, and we encourage you to seek out their titles in bookstores and libraries countrywide.

And do join us at the Ockham New Zealand Book Awards ceremony in the Kiri Te Kanawa Theatre at Auckland's Aotea Centre on Wednesday 12 May. For more details and tickets visit www.writersfestival.co.nz

Booksellers Aotearoa New Zealand Award for Illustrated Non-Fiction

An Exquisite Legacy: The Life and Work of New Zealand Naturalist G.V. Hudson

George Gibbs
Published by Potton & Burton

George Hudson's grandson has produced a glorious tribute to his grandfather, not only one of New Zealand's greatest naturalists but also an artist of dazzling skill. In reproducing so many of these paintings for the first time, the author is scientifically and artistically scrupulous, with detailed captions and superb production values. Crucially, this is also an enlightening and lovingly written biography — we are drawn inside the world of an insect-mad fellow who became a significant figure in our natural history landscape.



Hiakai: Modern Māori Cuisine

Monique Fiso
Published by Godwit, Penguin Random House

Hiakai is no ordinary cookbook but rather one which, unusually, lets us see our natural environment with fresh eyes. Coming from award-winning chef Monique Fiso, it is the result of years of labour and research into Māori cuisine and all it represents.

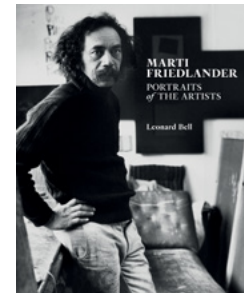


Passionately written, well edited, beautifully illustrated and presented, *Hiakai* weaves tikanga, history, cultivation, foraging and hunting into an influential classic of the kitchen, and also of cultural history; in these recipes Fiso shows the range of indigenous ingredients with sophisticated flair.

Marti Friedlander: Portraits of the Artists

Leonard Bell
Published by Auckland University Press

This elegantly produced collection of photographs, the bulk of which have never been published before, is exquisitely designed and edited — and the image reproduction is exceptional. The accompanying text breathes life into these individuals and, thanks to the layout, Marti Friedlander's uncanny ability to capture the spirit of her subjects shines through. With images of over 110 artists, photographed over several decades, this important volume is a wonderful cultural account of mid-to-late twentieth century creative life in New Zealand.



Nature — Stilled

Jane Ussher
Published by Te Papa Press

This sumptuously beautiful book presents a wondrous selection of specimens from Te Papa's natural history collection. Brilliantly photographed and produced, it highlights not just the breadth of these collections but also the



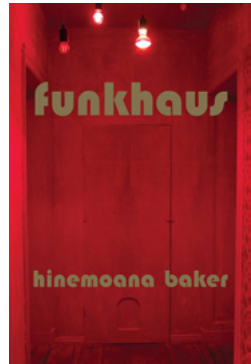
knowledge and passion of those who care for them. Jane Ussher is one of Aotearoa's most accomplished photographers and she has clearly approached this project with great respect and enthusiasm for the exhibits which represent our vanishing natural world, and have never been more worthy of our attention.

Mary and Peter Biggs Award for Poetry

Funkhaus

Hinemoana Baker
Published by Victoria University Press

The language of *Funkhaus* pumps and flows as if the collection were a great red heart. Hinemoana Baker's poems reference Sylvia Plath, Wi Parata, aunties, and P.J. Harvey. Vacuum cleaners, dogs, and polaroids also appear in imaginative ways.

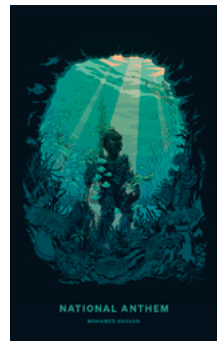


The book's shifts in subject matter, migratory metaphors and language encompass satirical political poetry, tender love lyrics and memorable street tunes. Like the emanations from the radio station of the title, these poetry messages travel; from Lake Geneva to Waitangi, Berlin to Ihumātao, *Funkhaus* transmits an unshakable array of emotions in rhythmic form.

National Anthem

Mohamed Hassan
Published by Dead Bird Books

Mohamed Hassan shapes the emotional outpouring of performance and the fast footwork of slam into perfectly timed poems of political commentary, personal awareness and metaphorical virtuosity. Refusing the easy refrains of nationalism, *National Anthem* syncopates family history, displacement and personal trauma with a devastating commentary on racism's most ugly manifestations. It mixes compromise and commitment, Egypt and Aotearoa, English and Arabic, laughter and anger, skepticism and love to sound out a new beat for poetry in this country and beyond.



Magnolia 木蘭

Nina Mingya Powles
Published by Seraph Press

Magnolia 木蘭 grows and blooms through mother-daughter conversations across generations, cultures and languages. Seeking to understand



her place in the world, a young writer journeys from New Zealand to China, England to Malaysia, from film to contemporary art, and from English to Mandarin, Hakka and Māori. Subtly but insistently exploding prejudices and expectations, Nina Mingya Powles presents a poetic mosaic that more than lives up to the brilliant elegance, or *mingya* 明雅, promised by her Chinese name.

The Savage Coloniser Book

Tusiata Avia
Published by Victoria University Press

Tusiata Avia turns her vociferous intellect and satirical vehemence to recording recent events and finds a base space for poetry in which to pick up the pieces and keep on moving. While furiously rejecting the destructive legacies of colonialism, her poems acknowledge that contradictions live at the centre of contemporary commitments. From garrulously hilarious observations to expressions of profound grief, the collection activates her insights, reforming our consciousness of what constitutes poetry as she goes.



Judges: Briar Wood (convenor), Jacob Edmond, Anne Kennedy

Jann Medlicott Acorn Prize for Fiction

Bug Week & Other Stories

Airini Beautrais
Published by Victoria University Press

Atmospheric and refined, *Bug Week* is compelling from start to finish. A tightly wound collection of short stories which explore the

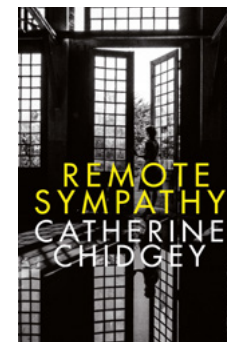


weird, the eerie and the mordantly funny, there's a sense of quiet unease and slow-burning rage. A talking albatross at an open mic night, a desperate ex-lover and a melancholy brothel owner are some of the characters encountered in this collection, which delves into the female experience, anger, male entitlement and restless malaise.

Remote Sympathy

Catherine Chidgey
Published by Victoria University Press

This transcendent novel about 'wilful blindness' is written as a series of letters, interviews and diary entries told from four different angles — the newly-appointed camp administrator at Buchenwald labour camp Sturmbannführer Dietrich Hahn, his wife Frau Greta Hahn, Dr Lenard Weber, who has invented a machine called a Sympathetic Vitaliser which he believes can cure cancer by using a process called 'remote sympathy', and the collective reflections of Weimar citizens. Immersive, profound and plotted with a breathtaking dexterity, *Remote Sympathy* is vividly evoked.



Judges: Kiran Dass (convenor), Claire Finlayson, Paul Little

Nothing to See

Pip Adam
Published by Victoria University Press

Looking at surveillance, identity, gender and people living on the margins under the fallout of capitalism, *Nothing to See* follows the lives of Peggy and Greta, who are recovering alcoholics (or rather, one alcoholic who has splintered off into two). And just when you think you've cracked what is going on, Pip Adam turns everything in this dazzling novel inside out, leaving the reader momentarily disoriented but exhilarated.



Sprigs

Brannavan Gnanalingam
Published by Lawrence & Gibson

A searing novel which examines violence, racism and toxic masculinity, *Sprigs* looks at the consequences of a sexual assault at a high school rugby game aftermath, and the ripple effect of trauma that follows. Brannavan Gnanalingam deftly brings together a hefty cast of characters, skillfully orchestrating multiple voices and perspectives. Written with sensitivity, nuance and not without bursts of comic relief, *Sprigs* is an unflinching novel which forces us to reckon with uncomfortable truths about power and privilege in Aotearoa.



General Non-Fiction Award

Specimen: Personal Essays

Madison Hamill
Published by Victoria University Press

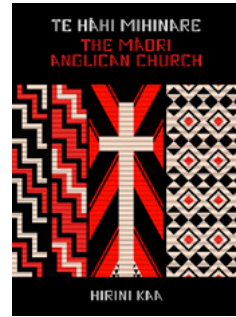
This compulsively readable collection charts the inner life of someone who often feels at odds with those around her. Madison Hamill traces her sense of difference in fresh, razor-sharp prose, via encounters ranging from a bullying primary school teacher, whom she quietly bests, to the clients at an under-funded drug clinic in Cape Town, for whom she can do nothing. It is as memorable for her unblinking view of herself as it is for her compassionate awareness of others' struggles.



Te Hāhi Mihinare | The Māori Anglican Church

Hirini Kaa
Published by Bridget Williams Books

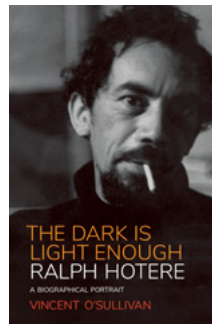
This is both a history of an institution and a corrective for 'fatal impact' narratives in which Māori are presented as the passive victims of colonisation; Hirini Kaa shows how iwi adapted the new religion to make it their own. His emblematic example is the haka 'Te Pārekereke', which celebrates the arrival of Christianity and the gift of seedling kumara — both of which promise a new start. Performing the haka acknowledges the renegotiation of mātauranga through Christianity, and embraces both continuity and change.



The Dark is Light Enough: Ralph Hotere A Biographical Portrait

Vincent O'Sullivan
Published by Penguin, Penguin Random House

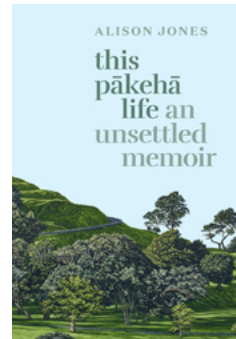
In this exemplary instance of the biographer's art, Vincent O'Sullivan transcends what in other hands may have proved an insurmountable obstacle — writing about an artist without illustrations of the work — by producing a life story that 'feeds back' into the imagery, deepening and enriching all subsequent encounters. He has given us a sensitive, meticulously researched portrait of one of Aotearoa New Zealand's most important modern artists.



This Pākehā Life: An Unsettled Memoir

Alison Jones
Published by Bridget Williams Books

The question at the heart of educationalist Alison Jones's multi-stranded memoir is what it means, for her, to be Pākehā: a non-Māori New Zealander who belongs nowhere else. It is a coming-of-age story, a family story, and a story of place. It also charts a personal journey at a time of intellectual foment, when making a difference meant protesting. Above all, it's about friendship, and about learning how to listen in order to work collaboratively towards positive change.



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ANZL Academy of New Zealand Literature
Te Whare Mātātūhi o Aotearoa

In-depth coverage of Aotearoa's best contemporary fiction, non-fiction and poetry

Reviews * Features * Interviews * Round Tables * Opinions

www.anzliterature.com

Judges: Sarah Shieff (convenor), Arini Loader, Michael Yeomans



MAKING HOMES, BUILDING IMAGINATION

Meet Ricardo Dias Vilem, our crane operator with the most mellifluous accent on any Auckland building site. Son of a Brazilian leitor ávida – his mum still reads four books a week – Ricardo’s recently finished the Inkheart trilogy. “The Portuguese title is *Coração de Tinta*; it’s about a dad who reads a book and finds that everything he’s reading comes to reality. Comes from the book world to the real world.” Then what happens? “His wife disappears into the book: a bad guy comes out of it.” He smiles. “But it’s very enchanting.” Next on the reading list is a giant Brothers Grimm tome, sent by his German mother-in-law to mark the birth of Ricardo and Christina’s first child. And so the book magic will roll on, as it does for us, humble sponsors for six years (and counting) of the wondrous New Zealand Book Awards.

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